(c) whether this new product will be cheaper and comfortable in comparison to polythene?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) to (c) No sir. However, research and development is going on in CSIR and other Institutions to produce bio-degradable plastics by addition of certain additives like starch, etc. in polythene.

Slow down in exports

872. SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT:
SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) the rate of growth of exports targeted during 2007-08;

(b) what has been the actual performance during April-July, 2007;

(c) in which sectors there has been a slowdown and causes for slowdown, other than the strengthening of the rupee; and

(d) what is the remedial action taken or proposed to be taken?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) The export target for the year 2007-08 has been set at US$ 160 billion with a growth rate of 27% over the achievement during the previous year.

(b) During April-July, 2007 exports reached a level of US$ 46.8 billion.

(c) During the first half of the current year, as per the latest available preliminary estimates, slow growth was registered in the export of a number of items including handicraft, a large number of textile items, Tea, Coffee, Fruits & Vegetables, Carpet, Plastic & Linoleum, Cashew, Cotton, Yarn, Fabric & made-ups, Jute Manufacturing including floor covering, etc. While the appreciation of the Rupee is one of the major reasons for the slowdown of exports, the other factors responsible such slowdown include movement of exchange rate and price level of competing countries, input prices, productivity, domestic capacity, foreign demand, etc.

(d) The Government has been interacting with the Export Promotion Councils on a regular basis to ascertain the problems faced by them in respect of export of specific commodities. Based on their suggestions appropriate measures are taken from time to time to fine tune export promotion strategy and improve export performance.

Geographical indication to Darjeeling Tea

873. SHRI P.R. RAJAN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is planning to award geographical indication tag to the Darjeeling Tea;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) whether Government is implementing any project to boost the export of tea from India?